



Biweekly Narrative Seafood Report (No: 5-2002):Korea

Prepared by Alaska State Trade Representative in Korea

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1. Korea Economy Update

Power workers end strike; general walkout averted: Unionized workers at five power generation companies who launched a strike Feb. 24 ended the walkout yesterday upon reaching an agreement with the government, averting a massive general strike threatened by a powerful umbrella labor union.

Labor and the government agreed to exclude privatization of power plants from the agenda for their negotiations, in compliance with the arbitrary ruling by the National Labor Relations Commission on March 8. Privatization has been at the center of the conflict pitting labor against the government and management, with the government insisting that it is not an issue for negotiation.

In return, the unions asked the government to minimize criminal and other punishment for workers who participated in the strike.

Labor and the government said in their agreement that they apologized for the inconvenience they inflicted on people, and will abide by laws and principles so that such an unfortunate situation does not occur again.

Labor and management held overnight talks Monday night at the Lotte Hotel to end the power workers' strike amid rising tension over the massive general strike threatened by the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), a progressive labor union with 600,000 members. They resumed talks at 11 a.m. and signed the final agreement around 1 p.m. yesterday.

The agreement said they will make concerted efforts for the future development of the power industry. "Labor will end the strike immediately and return to work," it read.

Accordingly, the KCTU-led solidarity strike to support the striking workers, set to begin at 1 p.m. yesterday, was scrapped.

More than 3,000 striking power workers were expected to return to work shortly.

Following the agreement, the five power plant companies, subsidiaries of the state-run Korea Electric Power Corp., promised to make efforts to ensure fairness in determining civil and criminal responsibility and punitive action against striking workers.

Earlier, the KCTU had announced it would resist the government's privatization plan with a general strike, which it said some 120,000 workers would join. The threat of an imminent mass strike was realized, as some 36,000 unionists of Hyundai Motor Co. decided Monday to launch a four-hour strike yesterday afternoon to support thousands of striking power workers.

Tension was sky high yesterday morning as power companies announced they would hire 1,000 new employees unless striking union members ended their walkout by the April 12 deadline. The power companies estimated that 3,537 unionized workers, or 63.3 percent, did not report to work as of yesterday

(Source: April 3, 2002, the Korea Herald, Seoul, Korea)

Growth to be 5-6%, researchers predict: Domestic economists at private research institutes agreed Korea's economic growth for this year would be 5 to 6 percent, up from their original projections of 3 to 4 percent. Most of the economists said exports would rebound soon. They also said the economy is now "partly overheated."

The Federation of Korean Industries held a meeting Thursday to coordinate the views of private-sector economists over the economic outlook. Thirteen analysts in macroeconomics from the federation, the Korea Economic Research Institute, Samsung Economic Research Institute, LG Economic Research Institute and other six research institutes attended the meeting.

"The first-quarter growth will be about 6 percent, sharply higher than the original expectation of 2 to 3 percent," Hwang In-seong, a senior economist at Samsung, said. Oh Sang-hun, an analyst at SK Securities Co, said exports will expand about 10 percent for this year.

"Exports will rebound next month," said Kim Young-ick, a researcher at Daishin Economic Research Institute. But, Bae Sang-kun from Korea Economic Research Institute said, "It is too early to say when exports will rebound, because the imports of capital goods remain sluggish." Sin Hu-sik, an analyst at Daewoo Securities Co. said the economy could grow sharply in the first half of this year and then will grow moderately in the second half.

Though the stock and real estate markets are slightly overheated, the bubbles will not spread through the whole of the Korean economy, a majority of the private-sector economists insisted. "Only the real estate markets of Seoul and some regions are overheated," Mr. Bae said. Most analysts recommended the government should take partial measures against the surges of consumer debts, rather than raising interest rates soon. On the other hand, Mr. Hwang insisted the government should raise interest rates soon, since, if the bubbles burst it could sharply cool down the economy.

(Source: March 23, 2002, JoongAng Ilbo, Seoul, Korea)

2. Fisheries News in Korea

Seoul Hilton: Attention crab lovers! During the month of April, you can enjoy the Crab Extravaganza Festival at the Japanese restaurant Genji and Californian restaurant Cilantro at the Seoul Hilton.

Now for one month at the Seoul Hilton, you will have the opportunity to savor the truly delectable stone crab dishes at the Genji restaurant, such as Steamed Crab, Roasted Crab, Deep-Fried Crab, Crab Salad, and much more!

The Seoul Hilton also invites guests to dine at the Cilantro Restaurant where they can select from a range of mouth-watering crab dishes with a variety of sauces or simply let the crab specialist suggest a sauce.

For reservations or additional information, call Genji at (02) 317-3240 or the Cilantro at (02) 317-3062

(Source: March 27, 2002, the Korea Times, Seoul, Korea)

Koreans Consume Most Vegetables in the World: The Korea Rural Economic Institute released data dubbed "A 2000 Food Consumption List" Monday following the systems suggested by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The findings indicate Koreans' vegetable consumption per person ranked number one in the world with 187.6 kilograms per year, followed by Italy with 180, New Zealand with 140, and the US with 134 kilograms. The total consumption of grains was 176.6 kilograms, higher than those in Japan, Thailand, and Pakistan whose peoples' staple food is also built around rice. The overseas figures were based on data compiled in 1999.

Japan topped the list in the consumption of seafood with 66.5 kilograms, followed by Korea at 53.5 kilograms. The figure was quite low for fruit consumption as Koreans ate 52.3 kilograms on the average, very low compared to those of Thailand and the Netherlands, which recorded 142 and 135 kilograms each.

Meanwhile, the daily nutritional consumption marked 2,953 kilo-calories in 2000, similar to that of the advanced nations.

(Source: February 25, 2002, Arirang TV, Seoul, Korea)

3. Weekly Trend of Wholesale Fisheries Market in Korea: The 4th Week of March (March 25 – 30, 2002)

“ **Fish:** 1) Average prices went up by 0.1% from the previous week

2) While fresh pollock from Japan led the increase in price, very few local Pollock were supplied to the market due to poor harvest: W 44,000 per 10-kg-box for medium, 123% up from the previous week

3) Fresh local mackerel: the price decreased due to poor quality: W 39,500 per 10-kg-box for high, 6.1% down from the previous week

4) Fresh cod (imported): The price went up by 14.8% for medium from the previous week: W 7,200 per kg for medium

“ **Shellfish:** 1) Average prices increased by 8.06% from the previous week

2) Oyster: High- W 6,500 per kg (10.1% up from the previous week)/Medium - W 3,700 per kg (6.9% down from the previous week)/Low – W 2,700 per kg(6.9% up from the previous week)

(Source: Garakdong Market, Seoul, Korea: www.garak.co.kr)